

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-13 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 /078 W

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R 051815Z NOV 76

FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7258

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAO PAULO 2515

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SHUM, BR

SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS: POLITE VIOLENCE AGAIN IN THE SPOTLIGHT

1. SUMMARY: PUBLIC CONCERN WITH POLICE VIOLENCE HAS INCREASED AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN BRAZIL, IN THE ABSENCE OF RECENT FLAGRANT VIOLATIONS OF POLITICAL RIGHTS. POLICE VIOLENCE HAS LONG BEEN AN ENDEMIC PROBLEM. BUT PUBLIC CONCERN HAS BEEN RE-NEWED IN THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS WITH THE ASSASSINATION OF A PRIEST IN MATO GROSSO BY A POLICE OFFICIAL (BRASILIA 8929), THE KILLING OF INNOCENT CITIZENS IN RIO, THE ADDUCTION OF THE BISHOP OF NOVA IGUACU, ALSO IN RIO (BRASILIA 8414), AND THE SUMMARY EXECUTION OF THIEVES AND THE MACHINE-GUNNING OF A CAR FULL OF YOUTHS IN SAO PAULO. THE PUBLICATION TWO WEEKS AGO (BY A CHURCH-LINKED ORGANIZATION) OF A HIGHLY DOCUMENTED BOOK ABOUT THE OPERATION OF THE POLICE "DEATH SQUAD" IN SAO PAULO BY HELIO BICUDO, A FORMER SAO PAULO STATE PROSECUTOR, FURTHER HELPED FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON POLICE VIOLENCE. INITIAL OFFICIAL REACTION WAS TO LIMIT REPERCUSSION OF THE BOOK THROUGH CENSORSHIP AND ADMONITIONS TO THE PRESS AGAINST DISTORTING THE ISSUE. HOWEVER, POLICE AND GOVERNMENT LATER JOINED IN CONDEMNING POLICE ABUSES. END SUMMARY.

2. THERE HAS BEEN A RENEWAL OF PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT POLICE
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VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL. RIO AND SAO PAULO PAPERS CARRY FREQUENT

STORIES ABOUT POLICE KILLING CITIZENS, AND ON OCTOBER 31 THE ESTADO DE SAO PAULO CARRIED A FULL-PAGE REPORT DETAILING MANIFOLD CASES OF INVOLVEMENT OF STATE MILITARY POLICE MEN IN LYNCHINGS, BEATINGS, TORTURE AND EXTORTION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY DURING THE PAST TWO TO THREE YEARS. IN SAO PAULO, LATE LAST MONTH, THE POLICE TOOK THIEVES CAUGHT ROBBING A STORE TO A VACANT LOT AND MACHINE GUNNED THEM. ONE SURVIVED TO IDENTIFY THE OFFICERS INVOLVED AND BRING LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THEM. IN ANOTHER CASE, A PATROL CAR MACHINE-GUNNED A CAR CONTAINING THREE YOUTHS, PROVOKING PUBLIC OUTRAGE. IN RIO, THERE WAS AN EVEN MORE VIOLENT CASE IN MID-SEPTEMBER. POLICE PICKED UP-THREE YOUTHS FOR NO APPARENT REASON, BEAT THEM AND EXECUTED TWO OF THEM. ONE SOMEHOW SURVIVED, IDENTIFIED THE POLICE-MEN INVOLVED AND RECOUNTED THE DETAILS OF HIS ORDEAL. IN RIO, THE POLICE CALLED PRESS CONFERENCES TO REPUDIATE POLICE OFFICERS IDENTIFIED IN THE VARIOUS KILLINGS. IN SAO PAULO, THE HARDLINING STATE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC SECURITY, COL. ERASMOS DIAS, TRIED TO PASS THE "DEATH SQUAD" PROBLEM OFF AS THING OF THE PAST. HIS POSITION ON POLICE ACTIVITIES, AS STATED IN A LETTER TO "O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO" ON NOVEMBER 4, HAS BEEN TO ENCOURAGE ZEAL RATHER THEN OMISSION ON THE PART OF THE POLICE.

3. RECENT CONCERN WITH POLICE VIOLENCE HAS ALSO BEEN STIMULATED BY THE PUBLICATION OF A BOOK BY FORMER SAO PAULO PROSECUTOR HELIO BICUDO, "MY TESTIMONY ON THE DEATH SQUAD." THE BOOK IS ESSENTIALLY A PERSONAL MEMOIR ABOUT BICUDO'S RESEARCH AND DIFFICULTIES HE ENCOUNTERED AT EVER LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT IN CARRY-ING OUT HIS OFFICIAL ASSIGNED INVESTIGATION FROM MID-1970 TO MID-1979 WHEN HE WAS REMOVED FROM THE INVESTIGATION. "DEATH SQUAD" GENERATED A GREAT DEAL OF COMMENT FOR THE WAY IT DOCUMENTS, WITH NAMES AND OFFICIAL PAPERS, HOW THE DEATH SQUAD OPERATED AND HOW BICUDO'S INVESTIGATION WAS OBSTRUCTED, INCLUDING BY THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND BY THE GOVERNOR OF SAO PAULO. HIS CONCLUSIONS ARE THAT THE DEATH SQUAD WAS ORGANIZED BY THE POLICE IN THE LATE SIXTIES IN RESPONSE TO INTENSE PRESSURES TO LOWER THE RAPIDLY INCREASING CRIME RATE. KILLING OF CRIMINALS SOON DEVELOPED INTO AN INSTITUTIONALIZED POLICE PROTECTION RACKET. BICUDO ATTEMPTED TO CONVICT SAO PAULO'S MOST PROMINENT POLICE DETECTIVE, SERGIO FLEURY, BUT WAS INSTEAD REMOVED FROM THE INVESTIGATION. THE CASE AGAINST FLEURY IS STILL IN THE COURTS;
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HE HAS BEEN CONVICTED BUT NOT SENTENCED. FLEURY IS STILL AT LIBERTY, THE BENEFICIARY OF A LAW TAILOR-MADE FOR HIS CASE.

4. PRESS REACTION TO THE BOOK WAS VERY FAVORABLE. VEJA MAGAZINE INTERVIEWED BICUDO; HE HAD A SPREAD IN MANCHETE; AND O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO GAVE THE BOOK A SPECIAL REVIEW. MAJOR NEWSPAPERS GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO THE BOOK'S PUBLICATION AND BICUDO'S COURAGE IN WRITING IT.

5. INITIAL OFFICAL REACTION TO THE BOOK WAS NOT SURPRISINGLY, NEGATIVE. PROFESSOR DALMO DALLARI, PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COMMISSION ON JUSTICE AND PEACE, THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION UNDER WHOSE AUSPICES THE BOOK WAS PUBLICLED, TOLD CONGEN POL OFF COUNSELOR THAT HE HAD BEEN CALLED IN BY THE CHIEF OF THE FEDERAL POLICE IN SAO PAULO TO EXPLAIN WHY THE BOOK HAD BEEN PUBLISHED JUST BEFORE THE NOVEMBER MUNICIAPL ELECTIONS. DALLARI SAID HE HAD TOLD THE FEDERAL POLICE THAT HE HAD BEEN TRYING TO PUBLISH THE BOOK FOR SOME TIME, BUT THAT IT HAD BEEN VERY DIFFICULT TO FIND A PRINTER WILLING TO DO THE WORK, FOR FEAR OF POLICE REPRISALS. THUS IF WAS ONLY COINCIDENTAL THAT THE BOOK CAME OUT DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND AT A TIME WHEN POLICE ABUSES WERE HEADLINE NEWS. THE PRESS REPORTED THAT POLICE IN MINAS GERAIS ADVISED RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS NOT TO REPORT FURTHER ON ALLEGED ACTS OF POLICE ABUSE UNTIL AFTER THE NOVEMBER 15 ELECTIONS, BECAUSE THE REPORTS WERE HARMING THE STANDING OF ARENA, THE GOVERNMENT PARTY.

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7259

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAO PAULO 2515

FEDERAL CENSORS CUT ARTICLES ABOUT THE BOOK FROM "O SAO PAULO" THE NEWSPAPER OF THE SAO PULO ARCHDIOCESE. A SPECIAL ISSUE OF MOVIMENTO, THE LEFTWING SAO PAULO WEEKLY, WHICH WAS TO BE DEDICATED TO THE BOOK, WAS SUPPRESSED. BOTH "O SAO PAULO" AND "MOVIMENTO" SIMPLY PLANNED TO REPRINT MATERIAL WICH HAS ALREADY APPEARED IN UNCENSORED PUBLICATIONS. AN OFFICIAL NOTE FROM THE MINISTRY

OF JUSTICE ADMONISHED THE PRESS NOT TO DISTORT NEWS ABOUT ALLEGED POLICE VIOLENCE.

6. COMMENT: WITH THE DECLINE OF NOTORIOUS VIOLATIONS OF POLITICAL RIGHTS, POLICE VIOLENCE AGAINST ORDINARY CITIZENS IS BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN BRAZIL. POLICE CHIEFS IN MOST AREAS HAVE HAD A NATURAL TENDENCE TO PROTECT THEIR FORCES, BUT PUBLIC CONCERN OVER ABUSES HAS SO AUGMENTED PRESSURE ON THEM THAT THEY NOW FEEL OBLIGED TO MAKE A PUBLIC DISPLAY OF SEEING THAT JUSTICE IS METED OUT TO THOSE POLICE OFFICERS WHO ARE CAUGHT IN FLAGRANT VIOLATIONS. PRESIDENT GEISEL'S RECENT STATEMENTS TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF JUIZ DA FORA WILL ENCOURAGE THAT TREND. BUT ELIMINATING POLICE VIOLENCE OF WHICH THE DEATH SQUADS ARE ONE MANIFESTATION, WILL BE A LONG-RUN PROPOSITION. AS THE PARANA STATE SECRETARY OF PUBLIC SECURITY OBSERVED TO A CONGREGATION "THE POLICE ARE AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF THE SOCIETY TO WHICH THEY BELONG. OUR INSTITUTIONS OF PUBLIC SECURITY ARE WEAK. WE HAVE A LONG AND DIFFICULT EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AHEAD

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OF US."

7. EMBASSY CONCURS.
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Message Attributes

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